



Main Menu

[Donate](#)
[What is the FSP?](#)
[Join Us](#)
[Moving to New Hampshire](#)
[Events](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Discussion Forum](#)
[News](#)
[Get Involved](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[Log In](#)

[Home](#)

Spike in gun sales after presidential election 2008

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Spike in assault weapon sales following election

Fear of a possible crackdown on assault weapons by President-elect Barack Obama is causing a spike in pre-inauguration sales of the weapons and some types of ammunition, according to local gun shop owners.

"There has been an increase in sales, because people are not sure what he is going to do," said Rob Kalil, owner of Gun and Sport North in Lawrence, Mass.

Kalil said sales of assault weapons such as the AR-15, the civilian model of the military's M-16 rifle, had already been creeping up slowly to the point where he was selling about one a week. Since the election, he is now selling two or three a week.

Bob Lee, owner of Lee's Gun Shop in Londonderry, estimated that his sales have increased 100 percent thanks to Obama.

He compared the demand to a "shark feeding frenzy." He said he's seen lines of customers going out the door on Saturdays.

"At the bigger stores, they were 150 deep," he said, and the lines are disappearing only when there are no guns left to buy.

Sales are also booming at State Line Guns, Ammo & Archery in Plaistow. Compared to November 2007, gun sales are up 235 percent, and ammunition sales are up 165 percent, said shop owner Gene Rochette.

Al's Gun & Reel Shop in Derry has seen a similar increase, said Theresa Bacon, who owns the shop with her husband, Al.

"For us, it's a huge number," she said. "We keep ordering every day, so we've always got some in stock."

Bob Williams of Affordable Firearms in Pelham, N.H., estimated that he is selling 25 to 35 percent more merchandise to gun owners fearful that Obama will crack down.

He said the same thing happened the last time a Democratic president was elected.

"It was like this when Clinton got in," Williams said.

It's not just a local phenomenon. Gun enthusiasts nationwide are stocking up on firearms out of fear that the combination of an Obama administration and a Democrat-dominated Congress will result in tough new gun laws.

Obama has said he respects Americans' Second Amendment right to bear arms, but that he favors "common sense" gun laws. Gun rights advocates have interpreted that to mean that he will attempt to curb ownership of assault and concealed weapons.

If Obama does order a ban on assault weapons, Massachusetts' community of licensed gun owners is not likely to notice much of a difference.

The state has its own assault weapons ban in place, so to sell the weapons, certain features on such weapons sold in other states must be removed before they can be sold here, Kalil said. **In New Hampshire, where there are no statewide assault weapon laws, an Obama ban would have a far more dramatic effect.**

The demand for assault weapons and ammunition has been so great that many gun shops are running out.

"People have gone crazy throughout the country," said Lee, of Lee's Gun Shop. "We're running out of things, and the manufacturers are backlogged."

He has 90 semiautomatic AR-15s on order and doesn't know when the manufacturers will make a delivery.

"Most of my distributors are out every day," and they don't know when they will have the merchandise, added Rochette, of State Line Guns, Ammo & Archery.

Williams, of Affordable Firearms, said sales have "increased to the point the only guns we can get are the AR-15," he said. "But you take what you can get from the distributor."

And with the increased demand, the prices of these guns have gone up as well.

"Prices are just skyrocketing," Williams said. For a case of 1,000 rounds of ammunition, customers will pay \$400 to \$500, he said.

Kalil, of Gun and Sport North, said the cost of an assault — or paramilitary — weapon has risen 5 to 8 percent. A semiautomatic rifle such as the AR-15, which would have cost about \$799 to \$850 not long ago, is now selling in the \$900 range, he said.

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